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INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 000871

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/30/2016
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SUBJECT: FINNS URGE IRAN TO STOP ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

Classified By: PolChief Gregory Thome, Reasons 1.4 (b and d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In Helsinki August 29, Finnish FM Tuomioja urged Iran to cease its uranium enrichment program immediately and to announce its acceptance of negotiations with the EU3 3 now. Tuomioja also told the Iranian Deputy FM that Iran must begin playing a constructive role in the Middle East by urging the release of Israeli soldiers and by discouraging "anyone who might launch rockets into Israel." Responding with a wholly predictable stream of propaganda, Iran's Deputy FM "largely avoided a discussion of what Iran has failed to do" in response to its international commitments and the EU3 3's package of incentives. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) On August 29, the GOF announced that Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja would host Iranian Deputy FM Saeed Jalili for talks that same afternoon in Helsinki regarding Iran's nuclear program. According to the MFA, the Finns agreed, at Iran's request, to the hastily organized meeting in hopes of garnering some useful information in advance of both the Sept. 1-2 GYMNICH meeting and High Rep Javier Solana's Aug. 30 telephone call to Iranian nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani. There was no press conference following the meeting, although Tuomioja made a statement to the Finnish press by telephone (forwarded septel). Finnish MFA Office Director for the Middle East Eija Rotinen gave PolChief the following readout on Aug. 30.

¶3. (C) Jalili opened the meeting with a long, "quite improvised" lecture that bordered on the ridiculous, Rotinen said. Among other things, he argued that Iran is the only true democracy in the region; that it has taken a lead role in promoting democracy and stability; and that Israel is a dictatorship and human rights violator. Jalili strenuously defended Iran's right to a peaceful nuclear program, highlighting his government's respect for the NPT and close cooperation with the IAEA. Finally, he came around to the alleged point of the meeting by reminding Tuomioja that Iran had taken the EU3 3 package of incentives very seriously, had formed several governmental committees to study it, and had given the international community its response on Aug. 22. (According to Rotinen, the only redeeming aspect of Jalili's soliloquy was that it included "none of the nonsense questioning Israel's right to exist.")

¶4. (C) Tuomioja responded by stating frankly that the only way for Iran to prove to the international community that it is serious about peace, stability and the EU3 3's very reasonable offer is to end its uranium enrichment program now. "If you're serious," Rotinen quoted Tuomioja as having said, "please announce soon -- Larijani's Aug. 30 phone conversation is not too soon -- that you will suspend enrichment" and come to the negotiating table. You lose nothing by stopping the program, he continued, and if Iran keeps enriching, the EU3 3 offer and any hopes for negotiation are destined to fail. Rotinen reported that

Tuomioja repeated this point three separate times during the conversation and received no noteworthy response.

¶5. (C) Rotinen added that Tuomioja also told Iran that it must play a positive role in helping ensure peace in the Middle East. While Tuomioja did not mention any organizations specifically by name, she said, he called on Iran to use its influence to press for the freeing of Israeli prisoners and to discourage "anyone who might launch rockets into Israel" or otherwise engage in terrorist attacks. Again, the Iranian offered "nothing dramatic" in response.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: Rotinen said that Tuomioja was left a bit uncertain as to why Jalili had pressed so hard over the weekend for a meeting. If the visit was intended to try to influence the EU Presidency in advance of the GYMNICH, it clearly was ineffective, instead providing the Finns the opportunity to deliver a reasonably strong message. Tuomioja followed up the night of Aug. 29 with a telephone briefing to Solana on the meeting, and the Finns have issued a report along the lines of this read-out to other EU member states. End Comment.

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